VISIT…

Movies and Methods II

ed. Bill Nichols
University of California Press
Berkeley 1985

15h7200

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND CINEMA: THE IMAGINARY DISCOURSE

CHARLES F. ALTMAN

Charles Altman's review of an issue of Communications *devoted to psychoanalysis and cinema plays a role for Part 5 similar to the role played by Paul Sandro's review of Christian Metz's early writing in Part 4. Altman notes the shifts in critical thinking that inform the psychoanalytical approach. Although many proponents of this approach claim it gradually evolved from structuralist linguistic approaches, Altman makes clear how this new perspective establishes quite different priorities, models, and insights. The absence of a distinct body of work seeking to legitimate or to place the psychoanalytic study of film historically is symptomatic for Altman of how French critical writing has tended to appropriate the rhetorical power of a whole series of disciplines that rose to prominence after World War II: existentialism, phenomenology, structural linguistics, "and now Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis." In France, more than in English-speaking countries, a dominant paradigm becomes taken for granted, and its connection with previous modes of thought is assumed. Hence, the jump from a structural linguistic semiotics to a psychoanalytic one may seem to be more arbitrary and radical to an outside observer than it does to a direct participant, for whom the prevailing pattern of thought gradually shifts. Unfortunately, few participants appear motivated to explain these shifts to outsiders as anything but a "natural" continuity. For that reason, Altman's review is extremely valuable.*

In the review, Altman identifies two major changes in emphasis between the psychoanalytic approach and a more classical, presemiotic one. (Altman's discussion here can be augmented by Heath's discussion of the difference between the object cinema and the operation cinema in the preceding article—a difference between linguistic and psychoanalytic semiotics.) These changes center on the metaphors or analogies used to describe the film experience, namely, the shift from seeing the screen as a window (Bazin) or frame (Mitry) to seeing it as a mirror (drawing heavily on French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's description of an infantile "mirror-stage," which Altman summarizes concisely). His discussion of how this shift poses an entirely new set of questions is exceptionally instructive. It suggests something both of the complex relationship between specific facts and the metaphors that derive from them and of how shifts in metaphor allow new theoretical questions to be asked and new film practices, especially modernist, reflexive practices, to be described or explained more adequately than they have been.

These points are pursued in Altman's discussion of the analogy between film and dream as a second change of focus, which moves away from a conception of

film as a reflection of reality toward a conception of film as mental operation. Under this new tendency, film is a "thinking about" social conditions, rather than a manifestation of thought within the constraints of existing social conditions—just the characterization Charles Eckert hoped to avoid. The psychoanalytic approaches return to structural linguistics via the film-as-dream analogy, since they regard dreams within the rigorous framework of Freud's theory of dreamwork and of subsequent attempts to understand the operations of the unconscious as linguistic in nature.

Finally, Altman reminds us of the problems of reasoning by analogy. He points to three major drawbacks, including the strong possibility that such analogies trap the psychoanalytic commentator in an imaginary discourse. All in all, Altman's review is a compact but illuminating description of recent psychoanalytic approaches to film.

•

Christian Metz, Thierry Kuntzel, and Raymond Bellour, eds. *Communications* 23. Paris: Centre d'Etudes Transdisciplinaires, 1975.

What are we going to do about Frenchspeak? Should we learn this new jargon-laden language, which is slowly infiltrating the American scene through departments of French and comparative literature, through highly selective summer institutes, and through a few hermetic journals? Or can we afford to ignore, indeed to repress, this admittedly (some would say purposefully) difficult material? The problem is a serious one, for Frenchspeak threatens to split American film criticism as it has already fragmented the fields of French, English, and comparative literature. Frenchspeakers and traditional critics tend to avoid each other, recognizing that their presuppositions, their vocabulary, their very languages are different. The American Frenchspeak ghetto has complicated things by maintaining an elitist, separationist policy: initiation rites no longer are limited to a reading of Freud, Marx, and Saussure; now one must know Lacan, Althusser, and Derrida as well. Faced with such demands, traditional critics have naturally run to more familiar ground: rhetorical criticism, genre study, film history. The holier-than-thou attitude often adopted by both sides has served only to deepen the schism.

Can anything be done about this situation? Does the highly theoretical literature of Frenchspeak contain insights which might be of use to American film historians and critics? In short, do Frenchspeak and our native tongue have *anything* in common? Often it seems that they do not. The French approach elevates theory to the rank of a separate discipline, while American criticism, eminently practical in nature, often ignores it entirely. If anything is to be recuperated (a four-letter word in Frenchspeak) from the French theoretical project for the benefit of American practical criticism, I believe it must be located in the realm of methodology, of strategies for viewing the filmic text. Frenchspeak is primarily devoted to understanding *textuality,* while American practice concentrates on understanding *texts;* the problem of methodology represents the intersection of

these two approaches. If we are to avoid a radical rift in American film scholarship it is essential that American critics have access at least to the methodological level implicit in French theory. To this end, I have concentrated in the following pages on providing the apparatus necessary for an understanding of recent developments in French film theory. Furthermore, I have chosen to stress the continuity between French innovations and American tradition rather than their differences.

In its composition, *Communications* 23 is an odd beast. The four articles written by the issue's organizers (Christian Metz, Thierry Kuntzel, Raymond Bellour) take up fully 250 of the issue's 350 pages, while the other ten articles, written largely by newcomers to the film scene and old hands from related fields, divide up the remainder. By any normal standards this is not a single issue, but four full-fledged books (Metz has 60,000 words, Kuntzel has 30,000 plus illustrations, Bellour has 60,000 plus illustrations, short articles have a total of 70,000 words), each reflecting a different interpretation of the issue's title: *Psychoanalysis and Cinema.* In spite of their differences, however, these articles share an attitude which provides the issue with its overall tonality: almost all the contributors accept and invoke Freudian psychology with the fervor of converts.

It is nevertheless important to distinguish between two major strains of Freudianism present in *Communications* 23—the one clearly on the way out, the other coming in. Since the early days of structuralism a specific Freudian analogue has often been used in conjunction with the analysis of classical narrative. According to this model, plots follow an Oedipal configuration: both the protagonist's desire and the text itself are generated by a search for the Father. Like Oedipus, the protagonist is thus a detective. Popularized in the writings of Roland Barthes, this approach tends to project emphasis onto plot patterns and thus onto the text as signified. The Oedipal strategy dominated French criticism of the sixties and early seventies and remains an underlying factor throughout *Communications* 23—it is even specifically recognized in the preface ("Horizon of the text: the Oedipus as generator of narrative forms"). The approach which now prevails, however, emphasizes the specificity of the filmic sign; it is more attuned to the complex interrelationships between text and spectator, and thus to the text as signifier. The new psychoanalytical model is provided by Lacan's notion of the *stade du miroir* or "mirror stage" (the relevant material is contained in Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits,* Paris: Le Seuil, 1966; especially "Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je").

According to Lacan, the infant develops between the ages of six to eighteen months from a state where his own mirror image appears to him as another child, to the point where he recognizes the image as himself. It is at this stage that the infant first fully realizes a notion of selfhood. Up to this moment he has related to himself only as a series of separate parts (*corps morcelé*); now, at a time when his powers of vision far outstrip his capacity for coordinated motor action, the child gains a sense of his own unity with the help of a mirror. The eyes are thus the very source of man's sense of Self. This *primary identification* at the same time presents a significant problem: the mirror image which the child identifies with

himself is in fact not the child itself, but only an image. The life of the Self thus begins under the sign of a *misapprehension*. Lacan further suggests that this primary identification of the child with his image also involves identification of the child with the mother. Though this period is called the "mirror stage," the notion of mirror should not be taken literally; Lacan bases his findings on a variety of mirror-like situations where children fail to distinguish Self from Other (as in the phenomenon of transitivism, where a child attributes his own behavior to another child or even to a doll).

The mirror stage corresponds to the *Imaginary order*. It is followed by the Oedipal stage, during which the child accedes to the *Symbolic order*, the order of language and of the Father. In Lacan's scenario, the father is assumed absent during the mirror stage, which is dominated by the mother. Once the child achieves primary identification, however, the father intervenes, separating the child from the mother. This separation constitutes the child's first encounter with the Law-of-the-father (*Loi du père*), with which he will later identify. It is at this point that the child gains a symbolizing ability closely related to the acquisition of language. In order to represent the mother when she is absent (or any other absent object), the child must resort to meaningful linguistic oppositions (such as the *Fort! Da!* invoked by Freud). Eventually, the child succeeds in naming the cause of the mother's absence, and in so doing names the father. This *secondary identification* with the *Name-of-the-Father* (not the real father but a symbolic figure of the Father-as-Law) permits the child to rise above his dual relationship with the mother and to enter into the triadic relationship basic to the family. In this way the child finally becomes a subject entirely distinct from his parents, prepared to enter into the world of language and of culture and capable of articulating the difference between Imaginary and Real.

From this rapid overview of the heart of Lacanian doctrine I have omitted many important steps. In particular I have passed over Lacan's treatment of the child's relationship to the phallus and the accompanying theory of signification. Surprisingly enough, however, little more than this is needed to follow the seemingly labyrinthine ways of *Communications* 23. The following table reduces an already inadequate summary to a shadow of Lacan's complex system, but it may provide a convenient method of summing up:

Mirror Stage	*Oedipal Stage*
primary identification	secondary identification
importance of the mother	importance of the father
dual relationship	triadic relationship
image	language
Imaginary order	Symbolic order

It is against this background that most of the analyses presented in *Communications* 23 must be seen. The concerns of the issue may conveniently be divided into two major areas: metaphors for the screen and film as dream.

SCREEN/MIRROR

What is the screen and how do we understand it? In an effort to answer this question film theoreticians have often resorted to metaphors which explain indirectly the nature and function of the screen. For Bazin, "the screen is not a frame like that of a picture but a mask which allows only a part of the action to be seen" ("Theater and Cinema—Part Two," in *What Is Cinema?*, Hugh Gray, translator, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, p. 105). Later in the same essay, Bazin goes on to specify that the screen's masking action is like that of a window; we don't see the space which extends on all sides of the screen but we never doubt the existence of that space. We feel that if we could move to the left or the right a bit, we would be able to catch a glimpse of the objects and people masked by the screen's border. In other words, on-screen space always suggests off-screen space, thus producing a centrifugal configuration. This theory of the screen-as-window underlies Bazin's entire realist theory.

For Jean Mitry, the window metaphor is insufficient because it describes only one half of the screen dialectic. If the screen has a tendency to become a mask it also operates as a frame, organizing internal space and concentrating interest on specific spots within the frame. This centripetal function can exist alongside (or rather against) a centrifugal one because the screen's border has a double existence: it is at the same time the point where the frame stops and the point where it starts. Furthermore, when the screen is seen as a window, the image takes on a depth which suggests a relationship to perspective painting; seen as a frame, however, the screen appears flat and graphic, like the paintings of the cubists who privilege the picture plane over the object plane.

The entire history of film criticism and theory, often seen as a dialectic between formalist and realist positions, might just as well be seen as a dialectic between these two metaphors for the screen:

Window	*Frame*
centrifugal	centripetal
perspective	graphic
object plane	picture plane

Indeed, this model is so persuasive that it has tended to blind film theoreticians to what it does *not* explain. In particular, the window/frame approach takes the existence of the image for granted, bracketing the apparatus for producing the image (projector, dark room, bright light source, flat reflective surface) as well as the apparatus for consuming that image (the spectator, his eyes, mind, and body). To put it another way, the image is treated as pure signified, while the signifier and the actual process of signification are neglected. Even when the frame metaphor is invoked, and the flatness of the picture plane is stressed (as in Eisenstein's analyses of the dynamism of diagonal lines within the frame), emphasis is placed on the organization of objects or the movement of people rather than on the cinematic process whereby those objects and people are evoked. Though the window

and frame metaphors appear diametrically opposed, they actually share an assumption of the screen's fundamental independence from the processes of production and consumption. The ability of the spectator to recognize objects and people is taken for granted and never analyzed.

It is in this context, I believe, that we must see the current French attempt to create a new metaphor for the screen, one which would take into account the process of signification itself. First suggested by Jean-Louis Baudry in "Cinéma: effets idéologiques produits par l'appareil de base" (*Cinéthique* 7–8, 1970, pp. 1–8; translated in *Film Quarterly* 28, Winter 1974–1975, pp. 39–47), this new metaphor is the *mirror* (the projected text thus being designated as *specular*). Cinema reconstitutes the conditions of Lacan's "mirror stage"—reduced môtor activity and predominance of visual sensations—and thus sets up an Imaginary relationship between the film spectator and the world which he sees mirrored on the screen. At first glance this comparison seems somewhat gratuitous. If any screen should be compared to a mirror it is that of the television, which figuratively mirrors the bourgeois home interior where it is located (with the set on) whenever it is not literally reflecting the objects or people in front of it (with the set off). How can the movie screen be a mirror when it is incapable of reflecting the viewer's face? The key to this problem lies in the meaning of the word "mirror" as it is used by Lacan; the notion of "mirror stage" applies to far more than the specific situation of the child being held up in front of a mirror (though the availability of a mirror surely speeds up the process of primary identification). Any "transitive" situation, in which the individual confuses the Imaginary with the Real, constitutes a "mirror" experience. Thus Christian Metz is able to show how cinema, in comparison with the theater, has an Imaginary signifier. On the stage a chair is a chair—before, during, and after the performance. In cinema the chair which was actually present during the filming delegates its image to replace it when the film is projected. There is no chair on the screen, only its reflection—its mirror image, as it were. In this extended sense, the mirror metaphor seems quite applicable, particularly if it can help us recapture those aspects of the film experience which remain unavailable to the window/frame dialectic.

The key to recent French fascination with the mirror metaphor lies in the fact that the mirror image (and mirror stage) relationship constitutes by itself a dialectic: between subject and mirror image there exist at the same time an identity (they have exactly the same outline, characteristics, coloring, and so forth) and a difference (the subject is flesh and blood, the image only an image). In the words of Catherine B. Clément, the screen has a double function: "*to show* (the primal scene, seductions, the fantastic) and *to block* the view at the same time" ("Les charlatans et les hystériques," p. 220). The screen, in other words, is like a veil. The process of comprehending the screen image is thus not a simple, direct one, as phenomenology would have it, but a complex dialectic. Metz sums this up: "To understand the fiction film, I must at one and the same time identify with the character (= Imaginary procedure) so that he may benefit by analogical projection from all the patterns of understanding which I possess, and not identify with him (= return to the Real) so that the fiction may be perceived as such (= as

Symbolic): this is the *reality illusion* [le *semble-réel*]. Similarly, to understand the film (any film), I must perceive the photographed object as absent, its photograph as present, and the presence of this absence as significant" ("Le signifiant imaginaire," p. 41). This play of absence and presence is of course radically different from that implied by the window metaphor: there the absence/presence dialectic suggested by the notion of masking was entirely located within the signified, whereas the mirror dialectic handles the process of signification from the point of view of the signifier and its status as Imaginary. The mirror approach recaptures the extent to which the film viewer, like the child in the mirror stage, can make sense and unity only by at first accepting a lie, which then calls for correction. Fiction films mean nothing if we refuse to take them—at least provisionally—as reality. On the other hand, they cannot achieve their true status as fiction if we hold permanently to that illusion. Only a structured alternation which holds these two approaches in tension permits us to perceive a film as fiction. In this sense, the spectator who must begin his viewing by an Imaginary relationship (taking absence for presence) concludes it with a Symbolic one (structuring the absence/presence relationship through the notion of fiction).

It is instructive to note how, in a practical way, the mirror metaphor permits questions and raises problems unavailable to the window/frame dialectic. Until the late sixties, the window/frame dialectic might have handled the major issues in film theory and practice quite well. The two major oppositions on which idealist film theory was based could easily be accommodated to the window/frame opposition. In terms of epistemology:

frame: formalism:: window: realism

and in terms of technique:

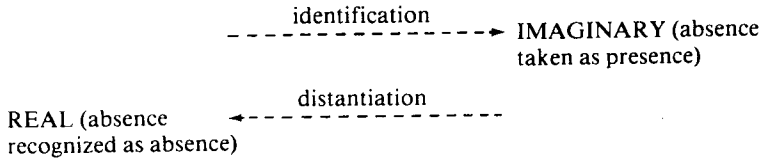
frame: montage:: window: plan-séquence + deep focus

Today these strategies no longer seem so fundamentally opposed. Though they represent two different approaches to breaking up, to portraying reality, neither realism nor formalism questions the basic assumption that the spectator looks right through a transparent signifier in order to perceive a substantial signified. The change in position of Eisenstein is significant here: once seen as the hero of the frame/montage/formalism school, he is now opposed to Vertov as the goat, simply because his major commitment was to the signified rather than to a highlighting of the signifier.

The constitutive opposition (dialectic) of film theory in the past decade is thus no longer that of formalism to realism, but of classical narrative (defined as that narrative, however constituted, which hides, which represses the signifier) to modernist narrative (defined as that narrative which foregrounds the signifier, i.e., which takes the process of signification as its signified). To the extent that the classical-modernist opposition governs current film theory, the window/frame dialectic fails to structure that theory, for neither the window nor the frame points to the problem of signification, nor can either metaphor properly account for the reflexive text, which derives its identity from a portrayed disparity be-

tween reality and its representation. The mirror analogy, however, sets up a clear dialectic capable of handling both the classical/modernist opposition and the cinema-viewing situation on which it rests.

We can understand this capacity more clearly by schematizing the relationships implied by the above Metz quote:



That is, in order to understand the projected image (or any fiction, and thus doubly of any fiction film—Metz is not very clear on this distinction) we must begin with an entrance into the imaginary order, treating two entities as identical even though they are not (absence/presence, character/spectator). This is the mode proper to classical narrative, the stage at which it attempts to stall us, tempting us never to proceed to the next phase. The second logical step in the progression is a return to the Real. This can take place in many different ways: when we remember that "it's only a film" to lessen the effect of violence, when the film apparatus is foregrounded within the film itself, or simply when the lights come up and destroy the image on the screen. This return to the Real is the mode proper to modernist narrative, which would have us forget our primary filmic identification in favor of a radical distinction between Real and Imaginary. The Symbolic is constituted by neither one of these two tendencies, but by their simultaneous presence in a tension which we call *fiction*—which implies neither a wholesale confusion of Real with imaginary, nor the erection of a watertight barrier between them, but the structuring of the two tendencies in a dialectic. In this sense, the mirror metaphor proves its timeliness, its ability to organize the terminology which has become central to the enterprise of current film theory.

FILM/DREAM

The notion that films are somehow like dreams is by no means a new one. As early as 1916 Hugo Munsterberg had declared that "In the photoplay our imagination is projected on the screen" (*The Photoplay: A Psychological Study,* New York: Dover, 1970, p. 41). By 1949, Hugo Mauerhofer could speak of a "Cinema Situation" which shares with the dream situation a set of general attributes: the spectator's passive state, his comfort, his anonymity, his receptiveness, together inducing a withdrawal from reality. Mauerhofer even captures an important difference separating the two activities: "While in sleep we ourselves produce our dreams, in the cinema they are presented to us ready-made" ("Psychology of the Film Experience," *Penguin Film Review* 8, 1949, p. 106). In this analysis Mauerhofer agrees with his contemporary Parker Tyler, for whom "Hollywood is but the industrialization of the mechanical worker's daylight dream"

(*The Hollywood Hallucination,* New York: Creative Age Press, 1944, p. 237). In fact two generations of critics have labeled Hollywood a "dream factory" since Ilya Ehrenburg first coined the expression (*Die Traumfabrik: Chronik des Films,* Berlin: Malik-Verlag, 1931).

The problem with this impressionistic comparison is that it provides no more than a general appreciation of film's attraction and effect. Suzanne Langer's *Feeling and Form* (New York: Scribner, 1953) attempts to discover the specific characteristics which tie cinema to the dream experience. Langer claims that "Cinema is 'like' dream in the mode of its presentation; it creates a virtual present, an order of direct apparition. That is the mode of dream." Thus "the percipient of a moving picture sees with the camera . . . the camera is his eye . . . he takes the place of the dreamer" (pp. 412–13). These very interesting reflections, which foreshadow to a considerable extent the type of work done by the current French school (especially Baudry), were unfortunately never followed up by any systematic investigation of the relationships between film and dream.

One of the important projects of *Communications* 23 is to remedy that situation. From several different viewpoints the members of the Metz group have attempted to discover parallels between film viewing and dreaming, thus continuing a line of inquiry begun in France by Cohen-Séat and Wallon. For Baudry the most important analogy is provided by the state of regression common to film and dream ("Le dispositif: approches métapsychologiques de l'impression de réalité"). Given the theater's darkness, the spectator's relative passivity, his enforced immobility, as well as the hypnotic effect of the play of light and shadows, film necessarily induces "an artificial regressive state" (p. 69). In other words, secondary processes and the reality principle are shunted aside in favor of primary processes and the pleasure principle. "Cinema, like dreams, would thus correspond to a form of temporary regression" (pp. 70–71).

While generally agreeing with Baudry's thesis, Metz tends to attribute cinema's tendency to induce regression to another source ("Le film de fiction et son spectateur: Etude métapsychologique"). Instead of emphasizing the general film-viewing situation—darkness, reduced motor activity, anonymity—Metz leans on film's propensity for forming fictions ("fantasies" in Freud's terminology). Whatever dreamlike aspects film owes to the circumstances of its projection and viewing, it reinforces them by organizing the film's images into fictions. "The fiction film, while grinding *out* images and sounds which overload our zones of shadow and irresponsibility, grinds *up* our affectivity and inhibits our actions" (p. 112). Starting from the basic assumption that fiction films induce a dreamlike state in the viewer even more than other films, Metz reaches a rather startling conclusion. If a coherent fiction can induce a state of artificial regression like that found in dreaming subjects, then both film and dream must possess a method of disguising the rough edges which might otherwise wake the subject and his secondary processes. In dream, this method is well known under the name of "secondary elaboration," which combines the results of the other dream-work operations into a single and fairly coherent whole. According to Metz, "secondary

elaboration (which in the production/perception of dreams is only one force among others, and not the main one at that) becomes in the production and in the perception of the film the dominant force, omnipresent, the force which weaves the mental fabric itself" (p. 123). Secondary elaboration keeps us within the dream/film world by rounding its contours, by making sure that it jars none of our expectations, by turning a deformed version of reality into a fiction so coherent that it no longer appears to be fiction.

Though Metz never suggests the parallel, his analysis of secondary elaboration has obvious consequences for our understanding of classical narrative. Nearly every word which has been said about classical narrative—seamless editing, motivated action and camera movement, absence of unexplained activity, and so forth—might have been said about the dream work's secondary elaboration. Here is a fertile notion which might permit us to tie the volumes of purely stylistic studies on classical narrative to a specific function within a large system. In this respect, Metz's article opens up new areas of investigation for traditional as well as Frenchspeak critics. In a similar way, in his article "Mise en scène: U.S.A." Marc Vernet demonstrates how psychoanalysis itself has contributed to the secondary elaboration of classical narrative. Vernet shows, apropos of films which are built around a psychoanalytic "cure," that "The most important contribution of psychoanalysis has been to furnish a new alibi for the structure of the American narrative film" (p. 233).

In his analysis of *The Most Dangerous Game* ("Le Travail du film, II"), Thierry Kuntzel provides a necessary complement to Metz's work. Where Metz stresses secondary elaboration, Kuntzel emphasizes the other aspects of the dream work: condensation, displacement, symbolization. A careful and extremely perceptive analysis of the opening sequence of *The Most Dangerous Game* permits Kuntzel to show that the Freudian notion of dream work can profitably be applied to film as an interpretational strategy, a methodology of reading. We no longer really need anyone to tell us that, for a variety of reasons, film is like dream. Instead, we need somebody to show us what difference that "fact" might make to our critical practice. This is the challenge that Kuntzel takes up. The problem would have been solved long ago except for an embarrassing difference between film and dream: according to Freud, dreams represent a deformation of material provided by the dreamer's "daily residue"; films, on the other hand, are not produced by the spectator, nor can they be said to relate directly to any given spectator's recent experiences. If the film represents the viewer's daylight dream, then the question remains: to what daily residue should this dream be related?

Kuntzel's solution to this problem has been to take introductory sequences (the murder of Elsie in *M,* the credits and the subsequent shipboard sequences in *King Kong* and *The Most Dangerous Game,* the airport shots which open *La Jetée)* as separable units which condense, displace, and symbolize the material of the remainder of the film. Instead of using the dream-work terms to describe the relationship between the dream's preconditions and the dream itself, he uses them to describe the relationship between the text's surface and deep structures (taking these as parallel to the dream's manifest and latent content). "There is no latent text *under* the manifest text constituted by the credit sequence, but *after* it

. . . another manifest text where are replayed in expanded form the elements which at first were expressed in laconic, abridged fashion—condensed, in Freud's terminology" (p. 148). The credit sequence is thus like the subject's dream, which at first is entirely unclear to him, because of its deformation of familiar events and relationships; the rest of the narrative untangles the dream material, explaining it by identifying the relationship latent within it. "The entire itinerary of *The Most Dangerous Game* serves to make the initial image [*figure*] *legible,* to progressively *reassure* the subject plunged *ex abrupto* into the uncertainty of the image" (p. 152). In other words, the spectator is *not* to be taken as homologous with the dreamer alone, as in previous film/dream analogies (including those of Metz and Baudry), but with two separate subjects: at first analogous to the dreamer (the introductory sequence representing his dream), the spectator subsequently becomes analogous to the analyst (the remainder of the film representing an explanation of the introductory "dream" material).

This strategy, which in Kuntzel's able hands can be so rewarding, nevertheless has its dangers. Consciousness serves as an absolute barrier separating the subject's daily life from his dream. Such absolute dividing lines exist in few films, however. Where does the "introductory sequence" end and its expanded form begin? Does Kuntzel's method apply only to those films which provide a clear line of demarcation between preliminary material and the body of the narrative? By choosing to analyze such films as *La Jetée, M,* and *The Most Dangerous Game* (which all provide an absolute barrier between two wholly separate parts), Kuntzel in fact suggests such a limitation. If this is the case, however, we will simply have reverted to the long accepted practice whereby one register in films possessing two clearly separate levels *(The Wizard of Oz, Woman in the Window, Belle de Jour)* is taken to have given rise, through the intermediary of a dreaming or hallucinating character, to the other register.

In the long run, Kuntzel's method fails to provide the link between the cinema-viewing situation and internal analysis of the film which his dream-work terminology seems to promise. Though it borrows its methodology from the dream work, Kuntzel's discourse eventually abandons all connections with the dream analogy. Perhaps it is for this reason that Kuntzel feels compelled to describe Freud's work as no more than an "intertext" for his own project (p. 183). But if Freud is only an intertext, and the terminology is separated from its specific dream context, then why should we grant any more status to Kuntzel's method than we would to any other? Once divorced from the dream situation to which Freud applies them, the dream-work terms revert to the level of any other stylistic labels, such as repetition, gradation, metaphor, or paradox. The Freudian terms may help us to understand textual interaction in selected films, but we should not be fooled into believing that the psychoanalytic source of the dream-work terminology lends it any particular status. In sum, Kuntzel's work departs both from the Metz/Baudry project of describing the cinema-viewing situation in terms of the dream apparatus and from the more general attempt to discover specific parallels between the Lacanian scenario and the film experience; instead Kuntzel provides a new type of interpretational strategy based on an appropriation rather than an application of the Freudian dream-work terminology.

CRITICISM/ANALOGY

As a mode of reasoning, analogy has always held a major place among the human sciences. Major, but largely unquestioned. To claim that one activity is homologous to another and to draw certain conclusions based on that analogy begs fundamental questions: Just how alike do the two activities have to be? What kind of conclusions does analogy authorize? Are there conclusions which are not proper? When Augustine compares David's victory over Goliath to Christ's defeat of the devil, he is implying that David and Christ share certain attributes, but he is definitely *not* suggesting that David shares Christ's divine nature. This kind of distinction is all the harder to establish when, as is often the case, analogy becomes a strategy for appropriating the rhetorical power of a modish discipline. Since the war France has passed through a number of these strategies; just as surely as medieval theology was valorized by the language of the Bible and the church fathers, so recent French critical discourse has been successively valorized by the languages of existential phenomenology, Saussurian linguistics, and now Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis. Literature is *like* language. The structure of the unconscious is *like* that of language. Without analogies of this sort the entire structuralist and poststructuralist critical enterprise would not exist. *Communications* 23 is no exception to this rule, for even its most basic claims are grounded on a constitutive analogy. The screen is *like* a mirror. Film is *like* dream. Yet when criticism depends on analogy it exposes itself to three fundamental problems, which are amply exemplified by *Communications* 23.

1. The Discourse of Analogy Is Incomplete

Let us for a moment take the analogical strategy of *Communications* 23 entirely on its own terms. The question still remains: is a visual metaphor like that of the mirror sufficient to capture the complexity of the film-viewing experience? We must conclude, I think, that it is not. Though one would hardly know it from reading *Communications* 23 (with the exception of a few lucid pages by Metz), films are not only light and shadow, they are sound as well. The French are not alone in forgetting this important fact, for sound certainly represents a universally neglected domain in film criticism and theory today. Ask any student about the mise-en-scène of a particular shot, the cutting pattern used in a given sequence, or the camera movement identified with a specific director, and chances are that a cogent and fairly detailed answer will soon be forthcoming. Ask the same student which theme was played with which scene, where the diegetic sounds were cut out, or whether asynchronous sound was used, and it's a good bet that these important aspects of the film will have been missed altogether. Indeed, all of our terminology suggests that films are visual affairs: *spectators* go to *see* a film at a special *viewing* in the *visual* arts building. Between terms like these and Lacan's preference for the visual metaphor, it is hardly surprising that psychoanalytic criticism should stress the video aspect of the film experience.

Even the Greeks, however, knew that the story of Narcissus is incomplete without that of Echo: the audio mirror completes the video mirror. In fact this

familiar myth provides an elegant explanation of the relationship between image and sound tracks. Echo was once much more than she now is; she had the power to initiate speech. In fact she told such fascinating stories that Juno sat around by the hour listening to her, while Jove looked to his amours with no thought of his legal consort. Jealous as usual, Juno blamed her problems on Echo's loquaciousness and thus reduced the poor nymph to reproducing the sounds of those she meets. *Before the advent of sound film, the sound track (the radio) had the power to initiate speech. In fact it told such fascinating stories that the public stayed home by the hour listening to it. Jealous of the public's infidelity, Queen Cinema punished the poor sound track by removing its initiative and forcing it to reproduce the sounds mouthed by those on the image track.* When Echo met Narcissus, she was tantalized by his youthful beauty, but Narcissus, intent on his own reflection, had no time for Echo. She would have made overtures to him, but she could not speak without first having been spoken to. His world limited to two imaginary and thus unseizable lovers, Narcissus eventually died of grief.

Just as the unity of the subject in the mirror stage is achieved only at the price of mistaking an image for reality, so the unity of the sound film is purchased at the expense of a lie: a servile echo is taken as the actual voice of the character represented on the screen when in fact, with current technology, the sound recording which corresponds to any given image does not even appear on the film next to that image. Every unity is bought at the cost of a mistaken identity, and the sound/image unity is no exception. From its very beginnings the sound track is part of an *écart,* a splitting of the film phenomenon which turns cinema into something more akin to puppet theater or ventriloquism than to photography. More attention needs to be paid to the complexity engendered by film's two-track nature—and the unity-through-misapprehension model provided by the mirror stage appears tailor-made to encourage such attention—but little progress will be made if the Lacanian model is restricted to the visual image. Cinema depends on the reflection of sound as well as that of light. If cinema is to be compared to the visual mirror of Narcissus, then it must be likened to the audio mirror of Echo as well.

2. The Discourse of Analogy Is Programmatic

Freudian criticism has always had a tendency to be overly programmatic, the scenarios of childhood providing a program against which all adult texts are measured. To a surprising degree, Metz and Kuntzel are able to avoid this pitfall, by concentrating on what is particular to cinema (Metz) or by borrowing Freud's relational terms rather than his scenarios (Kuntzel). As a whole, however, the French intelligentsia have fallen prey to a programmatic impulse which often damages careful analysis. Raymond Bellour's analysis of *North by Northwest* ("le blocage symbolique") is a case in point. At times Bellour's reading takes the familiar course of Freudian symbol-chasing ("The miniaturization of the razor and the shaving brush suggests that the penis risks being reduced," p. 252) or willful overinterpretation (the play which Cary Grant never gets to see "must have been" *Oedipus Rex*). More serious, however, are those moments when Bellour's language reveals the programmatic, indeed allegorical style of his inter-

pretation: Hitchcock "accomplishes the Oedipal itinerary of his hero by inscribing him logically in the problematics of the murder of the father. But why, one might ask, if Townsend is the father—assuming that we are justified in placing him in this position—have him be killed by Vandamm, when it is the symbolic destiny of Thornhill which is at stake?" (p. 244). *Assuming that we are justified in placing him in this position* [*le faire venir à cette place*]: in order to establish his critical discourse, Bellour must accommodate Hitchcock's film to the Freudian/Lacanian scenario, labeling each character according to a single preconceived program. Medieval allegorical interpretation operates in precisely the same fashion.

Bellour continues: "Three elements suggest that Townsend be entered in the father's slot [*inscrire Townsend à la place du père*]. The first, age, is a strong element: on the generational level, Townsend is obviously 'a father' for Thornhill. The second element, their shared last initial, is weak, in that nothing, for example in their first names, reinforces this phonic equivalency. The third is a neutral element, which gains its value only as a part of the overall structure: Townsend is not, is no longer married" (pp. 244–45). Now that we have Townsend cast in the role of father, we must provide a reason for doing so. If we were to apply Bellour's argument widely, however, every older man in every movie would have to be "entered in the father's slot" for every bachelor who shares his last initial (the "phonic" argument of course does not hold–*T* and *Th* produce the same sound in French but not in English). When Bellour announces, at the high point of his argument, that the mythical Kaplan "is none other than the Name-of-the-Father" (p. 263), I must admit that I bristle. For a structuralist psychoanalyst whose avowed purpose is to avoid interpretations based on content paradigms, Bellour is all too delighted to be able to adjust his plot *(North by Northwest)* to a Lacanian counterpart (the Oedipal stage). As Guattari suggests in his contribution to the issue ("Le Divan du pauvre"), structuralist psychoanalysis has nothing to say to us if it insists on returning to the programmatic model of the fifties.

3. *The Discourse of Analogy Is Imaginary*

How do we understand the cinematic text? In answer to this question the *Communications* team adopts a simple hypothesis: we can best understand cinema by comparing it to psychoanalysis. The cinematic signifier is like the Imaginary Other of the mirror stage, the cinematic apparatus recalls that of dreams, the cinema-viewing situation makes each of us a voyeur witnessing the primal scene. Such analogizing performs an essential function within the discourse of the *Communications* group: it focuses cinema's various aspects around a single constitutive metaphor (the cinema apparatus equals the psychic apparatus), thus providing the cinematic experience with a unity which it otherwise would lack. In other words, this strategy establishes the identity of cinema by finding cinema reflected in psychoanalysis.

In short, the very notion of analogy, so essential to Metz's concept of the "Imaginary signifier," itself sets up an Imaginary relationship not unlike that associated by Lacan with the mirror stage. When I say that one thing resembles another, and thus can be understood by reference to that other (e.g., the cinema-viewing situation and the mirror stage), I am claiming to establish the unity of one area by finding it reflected in another. As in the relationship between the child and his mirror image, however, I must deny the differences implicit in the reflection in order to create that unity. It is thus only by adopting an Imaginary discourse himself that Metz is able to demonstrate that cinema has an Imaginary signifier. As a method of reasoning, analogy presents the constant danger that critical language will remain a prisoner of Imaginary relationships.

IDEOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF THE BASIC CINEMATOGRAPHIC APPARATUS

JEAN-LOUIS BAUDRY

In this seminal article, Jean-Louis Baudry, like many others in this volume, uses an analogy to develop the implications of his argument. Baudry claims that the masking of social contradiction and difference in the cinema resembles the masking of our perception of still images by the illusion of movement. Baudry elaborates on the basic concept of apparent movement to construct an imposing theoretical argument. He draws from Louis Althusser the idea that relations to real conditions which do not help us to realize how those relations were constructed are ipso facto ideological. They lack the "knowledge effect" that a realization of their production would entail. This idea allows Baudry to posit that the cinema, based as it is on an illusion of movement that we mistake for actual movement, is based on a fundamentally ideological effect.

Baudry turns to Jacques Lacan to demonstrate that this ideological effect involves constituting the viewer as a transcendental subject or imaginary unity. The continuous unfurling of a universe before our eyes at the cinema confirms our own centrality: When our vision roams freely, liberated from the body, the world exists for it. Our sight is the world's point of origin and its source of coherence. Baudry summarizes Lacan's notion of the mirror-stage, likening it to our experience at the cinema, where we identify not only with characters but also with the camera as the surrogate for our desire for order, organization, and unity. We want a narrative that makes sense of disparate experiences, that confirms the self as the transcendent, all-knowing center of the world.